

Alleghany / Roanoke Health District  
Office of Environmental Health  
**Mobile Unit Guidelines**

These are general guidelines for the permitting and operation of a mobile food unit. You may obtain a complete copy of the Virginia Department of Health Food Regulations from your local Health Department or you may access them on the internet at [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) .

- Submit an application for a Health Department permit along with the appropriate fees.
- A plan review and fee may also be required, check with the Environmental Health Specialist in your area.

**Push Carts** - these units are usually pulled behind vehicles with some type of overhead covering and usually sell only hot dog type products.



- Because these units are not equipped like a kitchen, a permitted commissary, which has all the required equipment, is required.
- **A home kitchen is not permitted for use as a mobile unit commissary.** A separate kitchen in the home may be approvable if it meets the requirements of a commercial kitchen. Also check with the local zoning and building departments.
- Other kitchens that may meet the requirements and can be permitted are: churches, social or recreational clubs, etc.
- Potable (drinkable) water in approved containers must be used on the unit.
- Ready to eat and cooked foods must not be handled with bare hands. Disposable gloves, tongs, utensils, deli tissue, etc. must be used.
- Some of these units have small hand sinks available. Waste water must be properly disposed of in a covered container.
- Check the Va. Food Regulations Section 12 VAC 5-421-2360 through 2580 regarding Mobile Water Tank and Mobile Food Establishment Water Tank & Sewage/Other Liquid Waste requirements if sinks are available on the unit.
- Keep sanitizer available for wiping cloths and a sanitizer test kit.
- Have a calibrated bi-metallic stem thermometer for checking temperatures.

- A hand washing sink with soap, disposable towels and signage for hand washing.
- See commissary requirements below.

### **COMMISSARY REQUIREMENTS**

- Must have an approved water supply and sewage disposal system.
- The servicing area must have overhead protection and the surfaces shall be constructed of smooth, nonabsorbent materials and be graded to drain.
- A hand washing sink with soap, disposable towels and signage for hand washing.
- A 3 compartment sink with drain boards for food prep and ware washing.
- A sanitizer test kit must be available.
- A utility sink for disposal of mop and other wastewater.
- Walls, floors and ceilings must be smooth, light colored and easily cleanable.
- Adequate refrigerators and freezers for cold storage. Thermometers must be in all units.
- Adequate heating or hot holding equipment.
- Bi-metallic stem thermometers for checking food temperatures.
- An employee restroom.
- Adequate dry storage shelving. All food, single service equipment to be stored 6 inches off the floor.
- If the commissary is approved to be at a private residence, the food prep and storage area must be separated by complete partitioning and solid, self-closing doors.

Mobile Trailers/Kitchens- These units are usually vans, trailers, or trucks that are large enough to have the equipment that a full service kitchen would have.



- If the mobile unit has all the required equipment, then a separate commissary is not required.
- Documentation that an approved water supply will be used to supply the unit as well as documentation to assure that all waste water will be disposed of in an approved dump station will be required.
- Check the Va. Food Regulations Section 12 VAC 5-421-2360 through 2580 for requirements regarding Mobile Water Tank and Mobile Food Establishment Water Tank & Sewage/Other Liquid Waste requirements.
- A hand washing sink with soap, paper towels and signage for hand washing.

- A 3 compartment sink for food prep and ware washing.
  - A sanitizer test kit must be available.
  - Walls, floors and ceilings must be smooth, light colored and easily cleanable.
  - Adequate refrigerators and freezers for cold storage. Thermometers must be in all units.
  - Adequate heating or hot holding equipment. A calibrated bi-metallic stem thermometer for checking hot food temperatures.
  - Adequate and approved ventilation and fire suppression for cooking equipment. Check with the local building or fire department regarding this.
  - Adequate dry storage shelving. All food and single service equipment must be stored 6 inches off the floor.
  - Adequate doors or screening to keep out insects.
  - Restroom and mop sinks may be optional.
  - A "person in charge or Certified Food Manager who has knowledge of basic food safety is required.
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- ✓ ALWAYS CHECK WITH PROPERTY OWNERS OR THE MUNICIPALITY BEFORE SETTING UP YOUR UNIT. A Health Department Mobile Permit only means that you have met the requirements of the health department.
  - ✓ A Health Department Mobile Permit is a state permit. You may take your unit out of the area it was permitted for but we recommend if you do so, that you contact the Health Department in that locality to let them know you have a valid permit.

Contact your local Health Department Environmental Health Specialist  
if you have any questions.

Alleghany / Roanoke City Health Districts  
Roanoke County / Vinton Health Department  
227 S. Pollard St. (physical address), P.O. Box 307 (mailing address)  
Vinton, VA 24179

Phone Number: Kathy Hartman, 540-857-7807, Ext. 124

